

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
BY CONGRESSMAN KEVIN CRAMER, NORTH DAKOTA (AL)
TO THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

MAY 7, 2013

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony for the fiscal 2014 National Defense Authorization Act. I thank you for your service as you guide the U.S. House of Representatives on the most important job of our federal government. National defense is not only our top priority, but our only mandatory function, as laid out in the Constitution.

If to “provide for the common defense” of our nation is not hard enough, we must do so in a situation of unprecedented debt. While it may be possible to make more strategic spending cuts from our military, which has done more with less, we know that reforming entitlement programs is where the significant spending cuts will have to come from. According to the Congressional Budget Office, spending on health programs and Social Security is projected to equal 10.9 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the coming decade, compared with a 40-year average of 7.2 percent, whereas defense spending is projected to average 3.0 percent of GDP, compared with a 40-year average of 4.7 percent.

Historically low defense spending alone is not necessarily a bad thing, but when the threats facing our nation are steady, if not increasing, it warrants cause for concern. Iran and North Korea continue to advance their ballistic missile and nuclear programs. Syria has shown a willingness to use chemical weapons. Pakistan continues to increase its nuclear capabilities with the threat of terrorist take over. Russia and China show no signs of slowing the development of their respective military assets. Our adversaries sense our uncertainty and they grow emboldened. Lastly, there is no shortage of terrorist groups who want to do harm to American people. Mr. Chairman, are we prepared for the challenges of this century?

We need military assets that project strength, swiftness, and superiority. We need assets that deter attack. This means maintaining our nuclear arsenal, flying the best planes, driving the best ground force, and sailing the best ships. This means giving our soldiers the best training and equipment around. The most expensive price tag is the loss of American lives, and the best way to avoid that cost is deterrence. The words of Ronald Reagan still ring true, “peace through strength.”

I’m very proud of our veteran, guard, reserve, and active military personnel. My own state, North Dakota, has a long history of service to our nation and continues to stand ready to face new challenges. Minot Air Force Base operates two of the three legs of our nuclear triad, B-52 bombers and Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, the most cost effective deterrent. Grand Forks Air Force Base currently flies the Global Hawk unmanned system and stands ready to serve with the next generation of aerial refueling tanker, the KC-46a. The North Dakota Air National Guard, The Happy Hooligans, based out of Fargo has a long history of excellence in defense of our nation. The Happy Hooligans were recently awarded their 15th Outstanding Unit award. The North Dakota Army National Guard has served numerous missions domestic and abroad with great success. The 1st Battalion, 188th Air Defense Artillery Regiment will soon arrive in Washington D.C. to defend our nation’s capital from airborne attack.

We must support our military with the resources they need to protect the significant freedom and prosperity we enjoy. Thank you for this opportunity.